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WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

Please note: no Israel Media Reaction Tuesday, April 6,  
Passover holiday.

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#). Mideast
- [2](#). Campaign Against Terrorism

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Key stories in the media:  
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PM Sharon was quoted as saying in a Passover-eve interview with Israel Radio: "Those who kill Jews and order to kill Jews because of the fact they are Jews deserve to die. Any self-respecting country facing murderers and their dispatchers must defend itself -- exactly like the U.S. and any country respecting itself." He was reiterating the view he expressed in the weekend newspapers that PA Chairman Yasser Arafat does not have insurance from assassination. During the weekend, leading media quoted Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage as saying Friday: "Our position on such questions -- the exile or assassination of Yasser Arafat -- is very well known. We are opposed and we have made that very clear to the government of Israel." Sharon also said in the interview that it will be easier to understand his disengagement plan once the U.S. has given something in exchange for it, a gesture which he said would be presented during his upcoming meeting with President Bush.

Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that Israel and the U.S. have nearly completed the formulation of the official notes that Sharon and Bush will exchange during their meeting on April 14. The newspaper quoted diplomatic sources in Jerusalem as saying, "only words and a few emphases" are left open. The newspaper says that Sharon will declare his intention to bring his disengagement plan, as has been presented by the media, to the cabinet for approval, and express his commitment to the road map. According to Ha'aretz, in Bush's note, the U.S. will declare its commitment to the road map. The newspaper quoted Israeli sources as saying that it will guarantee there will be no alternative plan and no diplomatic progress if the Palestinians do not tackle terrorism. Ha'aretz further reported that Bush will also promise Israel support in the war against terror and aggressive action, if the attacks from the evacuated territories persist. Ha'aretz reported that at this time the U.S. refuses to deal with the issue of a permanent agreement. Sunday, Maariv reported that the U.S. has launched an initiative to turn Sharon's disengagement plan into an international plan to which the UN, the EU, the Quartet and Arab states (Egypt and Jordan) are party, and which will be implemented in close coordination with the Palestinians. Maariv reported that in an attempt to promote this plan, talks are underway to coordinate a meeting between Sharon and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (which may be held in

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April in New York). Maariv said that Israeli officials would like to obtain UN recognition of its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip as the "end of the occupation" of the Gaza Strip, and the U.S. has enlisted to help achieve that goal.

Leading media reported that Sunday, at the cabinet meeting, Sharon lashed out at right-wing cabinet ministers Effi Eitam and Benny Elon, who are opposed to the disengagement plan. Sunday, Yediot reported that the government will offer a basket of benefits to

settlers who are evicted from their homes as a result of the disengagement plan, provided they choose to resettle in the Negev.

Maariv quoted Sharon as saying that Israelis "cannot take two tracks." Sharon was explaining the absolute veto he put on the possibility of renewing negotiations with Syria, in contrast to the opinion of the security establishment. The newspaper reported that, officially, however, Israel conveyed a message to Syria last week that it is willing to renew negotiations without preconditions, with an emphasis on terror in the first part of the talks.

During the weekend, all media reported that over 40 Palestinians were wounded during altercations on Friday at the Temple Mount in East Jerusalem. Leading media reported that the unrest started when a preacher at the Al Aqsa mosque incited against Israel.

Sunday, all media led with the killing on Saturday morning of a settler -- a father of six -- by a terrorist in Avnei Hefetz (West Bank). Hamas and Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the murder, saying it was in retaliation for the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin two weeks ago.

Leading with the situation in Iraq, Jerusalem Post reported, as did the other media, that anti-coalition demonstrations evolved into gun battles on Sunday in Iraq, leaving at least 15 people dead and over 200 people wounded, leading some Iraqi Governing Council officials to fear civil war. The media reported that eight U.S. soldiers were killed in Iraq during the weekend.

Convicted spy Jonathan Pollard was quoted as saying in a "first, face-to-face" interview with Yediot's Shimon Shiffer that Israel had betrayed him.

Jerusalem Post featured a long interview with the Irish-American writer Frank McCourt, the author of the Pulitzer-winning memoir "Angela's Ashes." McCourt recently visited Israeli as part of a State Department-sponsored "cultural ambassador" program.

During the weekend, all media reported that former minister of security affairs in the PA Cabinet called for Arafat's resignation in interviews with the international media. Some Israeli media reported that he recanted.

Sunday, Jerusalem Post reported that Thursday British PM Tony Blair offered a defense of Israel's assassination of Yassin, though he did not excuse it wholeheartedly.

Sunday, Yediot reported that Israeli cabinet ministers and other senior figures are required to remove their shoes and undergo body searches at airports in the United States. The newspaper quoted sources close to Labor Party Chairman Shimon Peres as saying that he did not regard the search as humiliating and that he has no problem with it. Former prime ministers Ehud Barak and Binyamin Netanyahu have been subjected to the same treatment. Yediot quoted another minister, speaking on condition of anonymity, as saying that that if Secretary of State Colin Powell or any member of the

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U.S. cabinet were treated in this way at Ben-Gurion airport, there would be an uproar. The newspaper quoted a source at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv as saying that said there is no procedure making such searches obligatory, and that the problem lies in lack of communication between the body that invited the Israeli VIP and the authorities at the airports.

All media reported that Sunday Attorney-General Menachem Mazuz decided not to charge Vice PM Ehud Olmert for bribery in the "Greek island" affair, in which Sharon is allegedly involved.

Sunday, Maariv and other media cited Powell's admission Friday that the "most dramatic" claim in his speech to the UN Security Council weeks before the war -- that Iraq had mobile biological laboratories -- appeared to have been based on faulty information.

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1. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "The knowledge that the most detailed plans may be overthrown by a deadly terrorist attack must fill the government of Israel with greater urgency toward making a combined move to fulfill its obligations."

Senior op-ed writer Uzi Benziman opined in Ha'aretz: "Sharon ... has stirred suspicions that, just as he doesn't hesitate to bandy about empty threats to kill Arafat, despite his promise to Bush, he is capable of entangling the president of the U.S. in a far-ranging diplomatic initiative that he has no real intention of carrying out."

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "[The Likud rank-and-file] will have to ask themselves whether they really agree to the Likud's implementing the program of 'Peace Now.'"

Block Quotes:  
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I. "Distracting the Public"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (April 5): "Sharon's attempt to deflect the attention of the public from his legal troubles and political failings by drawing attention to the negative role of Arafat, and by threatening to harm the Palestinian Authority leader, is quite ludicrous. It's an empty threat because Sharon has promised Bush no harm will come to Arafat. If there were any doubts about the binding nature of this commitment, American spokespeople, both senior and official, have declared that Washington is opposed to killing Arafat, or to his expulsion, and that Israel is aware of this opposition.... The Bush administration is willing to bypass him, but not take his head. Sharon is expected to know this and he shows no respect for the citizens of Israel with his exaggerated war cries that contradict the reality. The knowledge that the most detailed plans may be overthrown by a deadly terrorist attack must fill the government of Israel with greater urgency toward making a combined move to fulfill its obligations -- finding security for Israelis by, among other things -- the security fence following as closely as possible the delineation of the Green Line; the evacuation of illegal outposts and settlements, whose removal is already supposedly acceptable to Sharon; improving the conditions of the innocent Palestinian population that is not involved in terrorist activities; and approaching moderate Palestinian groups. If Israeli policy were handled this way, it is perfectly possible that the national mood could be much improved by Passover next year."

II. "So What If Sharon Said It?"

Senior op-ed writer Uzi Benziman opined in Ha'aretz (April 4): "Sharon's behavior raises the possibility that he'll be willing to gamble about Bush's support, even as he involves the U.S. president with his separation plan. At first glance, the separation plan seems to have emerged in the security-diplomatic sphere, and it is in this context that Sharon seeks the U.S. government's cooperation; but Sharon's current unbridled, reckless rhetoric creates suspicions that perhaps the separation initiative was also a ruse, designed to create a facade of a major diplomatic maneuver while its true purpose was to improve Sharon's own personal position, as he faces the police and the attorney general. In fact, statements are being made today in Israel about how the corruption case against Sharon ought to be ignored, in view of the 'historic policy' that is to be enacted in the Gaza pullout. Sharon himself has stirred suspicions that, just as he doesn't hesitate to bandy about empty threats to kill Arafat, despite his promise to Bush, he is capable of entangling the president of the U.S. in a far-ranging diplomatic initiative that he has no real intention of carrying out."

III. "'Peace Now' Supporting Sharon"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (April 4): "At the end of the week, Ha'aretz reported that the extremist left-wing movement 'Peace Now' has decided to launch a public campaign in support of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan. It is not so many years since that movement held a demonstration holding posters with the slogan 'Sharon is a Murderer.' Ariel Sharon has already closed the circle. In the past few months he has become the darling of the Israeli left. 'Peace Now,' which is the most extremist, deluded, element of the extreme left, has warmly welcomed Sharon's plan. In effect, judging by the platform of

that movement, Sharon has outflanked it -- and also Beilin's Geneva initiative -- on the left.... Beilin is reportedly demanding that the Likud, in its paid-up members' referendum, should vote not only on Sharon's disengagement plan but also on his [Beilin's] Geneva plan.... When the Likud rank-and-file come to vote on the Sharon plan, they will have to stop and think for a moment. They will have to ask themselves whether they really agree to the Likud's implementing the program of 'Peace Now.' Think about it, Likud members. Was it for this that you joined this movement? To realize the world view of 'Peace Now' the most extremist left-wing movement in Israel?"

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12. Campaign Against Terrorism:  
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Summary:  
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Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Fortunately, the Uzbek leadership has responded [to terrorist attacks] with the kind of resolve that Spain has avoided.... [But] it is one thing to fight an Islamism whose declared goal is the restoration of medieval theocracy. It is an entirely different thing to delay the arrival of political modernity."

Block Quotes:  
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"Trouble in Turkestan"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (April 4): "International terrorism barged last week [in Uzbekistan], with a series of bombings that have killed more than 40 people in Tashkent and Bukhara, and wounded dozens more. For the terrorists, the aim here is obvious. Uzbekistan, under the leadership of communist-era boss Islam Karimov, has allowed the establishment of American military bases on its soil, thus offering the U.S. a vital springboard into nearby Afghanistan. As they have done in Spain last month, it seems that America's enemies are out to attack its allies in the war on terrorism. Fortunately, the Uzbek leadership has responded with the kind of resolve that Spain has avoided, making it plain that it will meet the terrorists in the battlefield rather than seek ways to understand and appease them.... [But] it is one thing to fight an Islamism whose declared goal is the restoration of medieval theocracy. It is an entirely different thing to delay the arrival of political modernity."

LEBARON